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EVALUATION OF THE ADULT LEARNING CENTER OF ELIZABETHPORT BY STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS, OPERATIONS FROM 2/26/68 - 4/30/68.

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ACTIVITIES, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMED READING MATERIALS AT THE ADULT LEARNING CENTER OF ELIZABETHPORT (ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY) WERE EVALUATED IN 1968 BY STAFF MEMBERS AND PARTICIPANTS. STAFF OPINIONS DIFFERED AS TO THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MATERIALS, AND REASONS GIVEN FOR SUCCESS VARIED BETWEEN INTEREST LEVEL, SIZE OF PRINT AND LENGTH OF STORIES, THE CHALLENGE PROVIDED, AND SUITABILITY FOR CLIENTELE GROUPS. THE MORE BASIC MCGRAW-HILL MATERIALS PROVED VALUABLE IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPANISH SPEAKING PARTICIPANTS. STAFF MEMBERS SAW SUCH FACTORS AS A RELAXED ATMOSPHERE, COUNSELING AND PLACEMENT, THE TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS IN WORKING WITH STUDENTS, AND THE QUALITY AND VARIETY OF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE AT EACH LEVEL IN READING, MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH, AND OTHER SUBJECTS, AS VIRTUES OF THE CENTER. HOWEVER, WEAKNESSES WERE NOTED IN FACILITIES, STAFFING, TEACHER PREPARATION, AND CLASS MANAGEMENT, AND VARIOUS IMPROVEMENTS WERE SUGGESTED. OF THE 117 PARTICIPANTS QUERIED, MOST WERE SATISFIED WITH MATERIALS, FACILITIES, AND INSTRUCTION, BUT A NEED WAS EXPRESSED FOR MORE SPACE, NOISE CONTROL, AND HELP FOR SPANISH SPEAKING PERSONS. THE DOCUMENT INCLUDES STATISTICS ON ATTENDANCE, TESTING SERVICES, AND POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS. (LY)

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EVALUATION

OF

THE ADULT LEARNING CENTER OF ELIZABETHPORT

BY STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS

OPERATIONS FROM 2/26/68 - 4/30/68

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POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS OF ELIZABETHPORT

Elizabethport, also known as the port, is a section of Elizabeth, New Jersey. It is located on the waterfront of the Arthur Kill Van Kull and is bordered by Trumbull Street and Fulton Avenue on the north and south and Sixth and Front Streets on the east and west.

In 1960 the population of Elizabethport was 17,214 or 16.8% of the total population of the entire city. The non-white population of Elizabethport was 5,228 persons or approximately 35% of the total population of the port. A total of 3,364 families were counted as residents of the port in 1960. Of this number 1,487 were non-white, with 374 of these non-white families listed as poverty stricken.

The median income for the area was $5,322 in 1960, and approximately 53% of the houses in the area were rated as being substandard. In 1965 there were 4,552 children under the age of 18, and 674 of these children were on Aid to Dependent Children rolls during that same year with approximately 21% of the children in the area living in a home with only one parent present.

The median educational level in 1960 for Elizabethport residents was 8.7 with 3,677 people in the community having less than a 7th Grade education. The number of non-white people in the area with less than a 7th Grade education was 1,415.

EVALUATION
ADULT LEARNING CENTER OF ELIZABETHPORT
by Staff and Participants
2/26/68 - - - - - 4/30/68

Material

The staff's opinions differed on the most successful reading materials at the Center. Mott's Semi-Programmed Series, California Test Bureau Lessons For Self Instruction, McGraw-Hill Programmed Reading for Adults, and the Science Research Associates Reading Laboratories were the materials most mentioned in the evaluations of reading materials.

The reasons given for their success varied between (1) the interest level of materials, (2) the size of print and the length of stories, (3) the material providing a challenge, (4) the material relating to the types of people involved at the Center. The more basic McGraw-Hill reading programs have proven to be valuable aides in teaching English as a second language to our Spanish-speaking participants.

The material listed above was not without some faults, as far as the staff were concerned. The entire California Test Bureau LSI Reading Program does not include, as a part of the reading program a final examination to be used in measuring the participant's reading improvement; and the McGraw-Hill Programmed Reading for Adults material is complex at the beginning of Book 1, but becomes progressively less complex and very helpful to the participant during the middle and latter part of that book, which is the most basic and the first step in the reading program.

The Science Research Associates Reading Laboratory, IIA, IIB, IIC, were found to be the most complete reading series, and the kits include placement, diagnostic, and progress tests. When the clients become aware of how it is to be used, they can work through the program with virtually no help at all; unless they reach a new stage of learning or have other problems.

The good points noted about the Science Research Associates and Mott materials, according to the staff, were size of print, making it easier to read; the placement tests, being very simple to evaluate; and the interesting change of pace for the participants. Mott's Semi-Programmed reading material is the one most used at the Center presently, and the Science Research Associates Laboratories IIA, and IIB, IIC, are also widely used. The Science Research Associates material seems to be better for students on a higher reading level than the Mott because of the vocabulary and because it offers more of a challenge to participants of higher educational levels.

The Science Research Associates Reading for Understanding has not been used widely, since the students tend to find it much too technical for their needs. The Computational Skills Kit by the same company has a fault in that the print is too small and there is too much information put on each key card. Science Research Associates Laboratories, IA, and IB, seem to be written on such a low level that students don't find anything to relate to or show interest in, in the stories. The Grolier Reading Attainment System has progressive stages in reading levels. The lower levels of this material have the same fault as the laboratory, mentioned above, in the evaluation of the staff.

The Springboards, reading material by Portal Press, are very good. The kind of interest stories that the material deals with relates well to the type of community people involved at the Center. The only problem with the Springboards is that the teachers think that the work should be covered in a group setting to be more effective, and this cannot be done in the drop-in situation here at the Center.

LEARNING CENTER

The staff thought that the strengths of the Center lie in the relaxed atmosphere, the hours the Center is open, and the variety of programs and materials available at each level in reading, math, English, and other subjects offered at the Center. The evaluation also showed that the personalities of the staff members, when dealing with Center participants and with other staff members can be considered as assets. The quality of materials and the teachers' effectiveness in explaining them and helping students are also added strengths. The arrangement of tables and materials allows a majority of space to be available to participants who are studying and allows mobility in the Center with a minimum amount of disturbance to others.

The counselors were noted as another asset of the Center in the evaluation process. The first and initial contact with the Center is with one of the two counselors. This, we at the Center feel, is the critical point in the development of a relationship between those in the community and the Center. This is where a person either becomes a part of the Center or does not. The methods used by the counselors to relax and orient new participants and to introduce them to the California Test Bureau's Locator Test and Adult Tests of Basic Education do not seem to cause them to become afraid, embarrassed, or disgusted if their results are low, this must be a strength of the Center in order to get participation from the community.

We found, too, that by placing the participants at a grade placement level one year below the results of the test, they are able to handle the programmed material that they are assigned by the staff. This builds their

confidence because they are able to work through this initial material with great ease, and when more complicated steps are added during their program, they are not discouraged by mistakes or by a lack of knowledge because their confidence has been strengthened by their earlier successes.

The California Test Bureau's Test of Adult Basic Education has also proven its worth as a diagnostic tool at the Center. The test, while very lengthy, gives a very helpful profile of a participant's educational weaknesses and strengths in the three areas included in the test: 1. math, 2. reading comprehension, and 3. language.

The use of programmed materials as a teaching method has increased self-confidence in participants and has helped many of the participants overcome their fear of education. The great majority of students, when entering the Center for the first time, showed a fear of mathematics. Once they were started in programs and experienced instant success not only in math, but in other areas, such as English, that they did not experience such success in while attending school, they seemed to feel that they could learn these troublesome subjects. Instant success in programs is the greatest strength, I think, that the Center has to offer. Once the student develops self-confidence in his ability, half the job is done, and the rest depends on the teacher, and other within the Center, to keep the person involved in programs with materials of interest and challenge and to keep him motivated to learn.

It should also be noted that a great part of the success of this project is due to the desire of people in the community to learn, the educational center being located in a community setting, and the sincere effort made by

staff members to bring education to the community.

The weaknesses of the Center by no means overcome the strengths. Some of the noted weaknesses were considered at the beginning of the project. The space in which the Center is located is not adequate, but we chose this site because of a lack of other possible locations. The lack of storage space and space for the display of materials was also noted in the staff evaluations as a weakness. The noise level in the Center, especially in the evenings when a great amount of Spanish-speaking people are present, was mentioned, but we think that we have solved this problem by placing tables for the Language Master and other equipment used for English as a second language classes in the basement and placing the typewriters on the second floor. Some of the staff members think that often the staff is too noisy and that this should be corrected.

Another point brought out in the evaluations was the teachers' unfamiliarity with new materials and the lack of ability to explain these programs to the students. One of the teachers, working constantly with Spanish-speaking people, thought that teaching English as a second language is very eradic and uncoordinated, due to varying hours of student attendance, the varying amount of English each client knows, and the different teaching methods used by each teacher. Another problem cited was that the scheduling of staff work hours is not posted in time by the director and that this places hardships upon other staff members that are being asked to work the evening and afternoon shifts at the Center. Some of the staff members thought that the Center should be neater and all materials should have a place where they are kept and that more waste baskets are needed.

The Center, due to the great amount of paper work, could use more clerical help and a better system of preparing such reports on time. Some of this work includes attendance sheets for New Careers and Title V, daily attendance, weekly and monthly progress reports, in addition to student progress reports.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CENTER

There were many suggestions on ways to improve the Center, and each suggestion had some validity. One of the most important points brought out was the need for more training and more time for the teachers to become better acquainted with the materials in order to be able to explain any problem that students might be having trouble with.

Another suggestion was that the director make sure that the rest of the staff, especially the instructors spend more time on their personal education up-grading. Some thought that there should be a weekly staff meeting. It was also suggested that we develop recruiting methods that would bring to the Center those in the community that cannot read or write. Another immediate need was in the area of work scheduling. The staff members implied that if the work schedule was made up one month in advance, and each staff member were given a copy that there would be greater adherence to it. Since our schedule calls for dividing shifts between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m., it is necessary for staff members to know what hours they are working. The staff also thought that the Spanish-speaking people should make more use of the room designated for them. The methods of teaching them English include conversation, the Language Master, and the tape recorder, which might at times disturb other people who are studying.

The need for staff training and more time for the teachers, and in certain cases the instructors, to become better acquainted with the materials was also brought out in the evaluation when suggestions for improvement were asked for. The problem facing the teachers are those of being overburdened,

not by actual work, but by demands of clients coming in and out of the Center all day long allowing them no time to really study new material when it arrives. I think that the kinds of answers given by the staff on the evaluation sheets shows that they are sincere in their efforts to make our Center one of the best educational projects ever. This staff has been together since January 15. As yet there has been no major quarrel or ill feeling between any of the staff members. The staff remains a cooperative unit, working to the best of its ability for Center participants. There are some needs that must be satisfied, however, other than cooperation and sincere effort. The greatest of these needs are in the areas of training with materials, general educational training, and training in developing curriculums for those who are planning to take the State Equivalency Examination. These needs will be met as soon as possible. The director plans to set aside sixteen hours of staff training within this month. The second most important step would be to develop a coordinated filing, record-keeping, and scheduling system. A method of keeping accurate attendance is presently being developed, and I am sure that it will be adequate for our needs, and this will prove to be a great help in the reporting on weekly and monthly progress forms.

As mentioned in another part of the evaluation, there is a need for more clerical help in the Center. We have three young ladies assigned to work at the Center from the Neighborhood Youth Corp in Elizabeth, but at the present time, they lack needed typing skills to help with most of the clerical duties required by the Center. Both girls, working in the out-of-school program, are taking typing courses at the Center, but while this

is being done, the bulk of the clerical work is left for one person.

A great number of high school students have been coming to the Center asking for help with their studies. Since the Center is strictly for adult education, we have not attempted to enroll them in our program, but we have referred them to other organizations that are doing tutorial work with students. Their efforts to find educational help where they need it shows the need for a program like ours designed for high school students, not in the conventional, school-like atmosphere, but in the community setting.

The Center has been visited by many groups. Among these groups were a German team that was inspecting community action programs with the hope of finding ideas that could be applied in their country, a team from the Presbyterian Church, and young people from the "Summer of Service" Project, also various school groups. We have cooperated with such visitors by showing them materials, the entire Center operation, and equipment, and by discussing questions that they have had about how our Center works, how this particular project is doing, and what they might do in their community in the field of adult education.

Our project is proving that there is an interest among educators and social service groups and a need and desire in the community for people-oriented education. We hope that our Center will be only a beginning in a larger network of adult education programs, fashioned to meet the needs of people outside of conventional school situations.

PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION

The participants involved at the Adult Learning Center were asked to answer ten questions about the Center and its operation. The questions can be found on the last page of this evaluation. The staff thought that it was necessary to define the feelings of those involved, in order that the Center and the staff might use the data derived to help the Center operate and function better and provide greater benefits to those involved.

When asked if the teachers at the Center were helpful, 78% of the 117 people involved in the evaluation thought that they were, with 21% of the clients thinking that at times the teachers were too helpful. When talking with individuals about teachers or other staff members being too helpful, they stated that many times when they are working, a teacher or someone else from the Center would, without being asked, ask them how they were doing and if they were having any problem, breaking their trend of thought. Eighty-three per cent of those answering questionnaires thought that the Center was quiet while seventeen per cent thought that at times the Center was not quiet enough. Ninety-six per cent said that they would recommend that their friends become involved here, and that same amount of people thought that their education was being improved through the programs available. Of the 117 people answering the questionnaire, only 9% were not satisfied with their programs, but thought that they were helpful even thought they did not particularly care for the material used. Only three people of the 9% wanted their programs changed. Seventy-six per cent of those evaluated thought that the teachers explained the operation of the programmed material in detail. Ten

per cent thought that the teachers didn't explain it too well, and fourteen per cent said that although it was explained well, they did not understand it completely. Ninety per cent of the people answering the questionnaire stated that they look forward to coming to the Center, and ninety-seven per cent thought that the counselors were helpful in their explanation of how the Center functions and explained the testing and programmed operations of the Center. Ninety-nine per cent of those involved stated that they were not disturbed by the staff while they were working with their programs at the Center and its educational were satisfactory to ninety-nine per cent of the participants doing evaluation sheets.

The evaluation also asked for recommendations on how the Center could be improved. The greater majority of the answers to this question was to obtain more space and keeping the noise level at the Center down. Many of those answering thought that the Spanish-speaking people that come to the Center in the evenings make too much noise when they enter the building and greet friends studying here. The solution to this would be to make more use of the English conversation room that we have. The evaluation also brought out the need for more help for the Spanish-speaking people and possibly the need for a structured class to teach English as a second language.

The twenty-three trainees from the New Careers Program of CAFEO also used the questionnaire to explain some of their gripes. They had been told by their director that they would be instructed by professional teachers and would be learning in a classroom type situation which the Center does not provide. The role of the Adult Center has since been explained to the New

Careers trainees at a meeting which their director also attended, so that they might understand the Center's role as outlined to their director before their participation. The benefits that the Center could offer them in the area of education was explained, and the trainees began to see the Center in a better light.

The Center has also been approved by the Union County Title V Program to be a training agent in the area of basic education and employment orientation. Presently, we have seven enrollees attending the Center, they are involved in the educational phase of their planned program, which will include improvement of basic skills, orientation to the world of work, techniques of taking tests, how to apply for employment, methods of finding a job, and how to take an interview.

ATTENDANCE

The Grand Opening of the Center was held on February 24, 1968, at 128 First Street, and over two hundred community residents visited the Center. At the present time, we have two hundred and thirty-eight people involved in educational programs, and a registration listing of over four hundred people who have visited the Center since it became operational.

The average daily attendance is sixty participants, with the greatest number of people attending between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and between 7:30 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. The daily attendance at the Center is greater on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesday, with a slight drop in participation on Thursday and Friday. Attendance on Saturday is usually light, but there are certain participants who can only attend on this day because of other committments during the week.

The majority of those involved at the Center visit twice weekly, while others might attend once per month, and still others attend daily. The average participant spends at least two hours during each visit, with some people averaging as much as four hours per visit.

Between February 26 and April 23, 1968, the Center has been visited 1,543 times by those involved. The greatest number of monthly visits was in February, the month when operation of the Center began.

TESTING OF CENTER PARTICIPANTS

The testing device used at the Center is the California Test of Adult Basic Education. This particular test was chosen because it gives individual grade placements in reading comprehension, arithmetic, and language. The California Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) also has an advantage over other tests available, in that, once the test is scored, the teachers are able to identify, immediately, trouble areas one might have in these three areas that the test deals with.

Since the Center has been open, one hundred and fifty-five people have taken and completed the California TABE. Spanish-speaking people entering the Center and registering are asked to take the California Locator Test. If they show that their command of English is less than that needed to complete this examination, they are not required to take the California TABE. We also have fifty-one people registered for typing only, and these participants are not required to take the California TABE test. We do use a verbal test, originated by Mrs. Dorothy Minkoff, Director of the Adult Resource Center, to determine the Spanish-speaking person's ability to identify English letters, numbers, and basic English words, becoming progressively more difficult throughout the test.

At present we have four participants that upon completion of the testing were placed at the third grade level, fifteen people on the fourth grade level, thirty-two participants on the fifth grade level, thirty-four participants on the sixth grade level, sixteen participants on the seventh grade level, sixteen tested out on the eighth grade level, twenty-two on the ninth grade level, seventeen on a tenth grade level, and five on the eleventh grade level.

In an effort to find and establish concrete participant progress, we are presently retesting participants that have spent time working in areas that they had difficulty with when they were tested in the beginning of the program. At present we have tested seven people. The results of each retest, the persons attendance, and time spent at the Center can be found on the next page, Appendix A.

	Hours at Center	Number of Days Attended	Catagory Tested	Initial Test Scores	Retest Scores
#1	72	36	Reading Vocabulary " " Comprehension	11.4 10.8	12.0 10.5
#2	94	22	Reading Vocabulary " " Comprehension Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	10.8 11.1 9.1 7.8	10.5 10.6 10.4 12.0
#3	126	21	Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	8.4 7.4	12.0 12.0
#4	48	16	Reading Vocabulary " " Comprehension Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	9.3 7.9 6.1 6.1	8.2 8.4 8.0 9.2
#5	on staff		Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	6.7 7.9	10.7 11.3
#6	on staff		Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	12.0 9.3	11.8 11.0
#7	108	24	Arithmetic Reasoning " " Fundamentals	6.0 6.5	6.2 8.0

APPENDIX A

ERIC Clearinghouse
JUN 11 1968
on Adult Education